

Isa. 64:1–9
Ps. 80:1–7, 17–19
1 Cor. 1:3–9
Mark 13:24–37

A Loving Greeting

Goal for the Session *Children will rejoice in Paul’s word to the Corinthians as they prepare to welcome Christ.*

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on 1 Corinthians 1:3–9

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” E. Elizabeth Johnson

The letter’s thanksgiving (1:4–9) telegraphs to readers at the outset the basic concerns of the writer. In this case, Paul’s concerns are several related issues pertaining to the welfare of the house churches in Corinth: their charismatic giftedness (vv. 4, 7), their wealth—particularly but not only in terms of speech and knowledge (v. 5), the revelation of Christ in glory on the Day of the Lord (vv. 7, 8), and the faithfulness of the God who has called them (v. 9). Each of these subjects recurs throughout 1 Corinthians.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Carlos F. Cardoza-Orandi

This text points to one of the unique characteristics of the Christian religion: the intimate relationship between God and the Christian community that God bestows in and through Jesus Christ. Christianity gives witness to an intimate relationship among God, creation, and, in particular, the Christian community. This relationship is contextual: in other words, it takes its life and its shape from the particular terms of people’s cultures. Hence, Jesus is our brother, our Lord, our ancestor, our beloved one, our enlightened spirit. Paul reasserts that the Christian community will be sustained in this spiritual continuum for one crucial reason: “God is faithful” (v. 9).

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Martin B. Copenhaver

Paul proceeds to bless the Corinthian congregation. He has some urgent matters to take up with them, but those can wait for a time. Instead, Paul begins by offering a gift of blessing. It is an offering that, in itself, reminds his readers of the bonds they share. This passage invites us to offer thanks to God, not for material gifts, but for spiritual gifts found in the church. It might also serve as a reminder that the gathered body, the body of Christ, is itself intended to be a feast of abundance laid out for the sake of the world.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Charles L. Campbell

The grace of Jesus Christ, which is the source of the community’s faith and life, undercuts all divisions in the community based on human accomplishments or status. Grace here has radical social implications; it is not simply a word spoken to individuals or a power at work in individuals. Grace creates a new kind of community. Paul invites the Corinthian church—and the contemporary church—to become an odd, new people in the context of a culture divided between superior and inferior, honored and shamed, insider and outsider. The grace of Jesus Christ is the source of that new kind of community.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE
1 Corinthians 1:3–9

Focus on Your Teaching

Children know from experience how important kind words and encouragement are. Paul's words to the Corinthians are also an encouraging way to begin the season of Advent. This is a season that many children will know. Anytime the children recognize that they have experience and information that is important to the church, they realize that they are part of the church. Therefore, this session includes both the kind words from Paul and the first Sunday of Advent.

Encouraging God, I pray that my words to the children will encourage them to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- 4 votive candleholders
- purple or blue cloth
- offering basket
- Bible
- Singing the Feast*,
bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- Color Pack 1, 2, 3, 37
- orange paper
- scissors
- Resource Sheet 1

For Responding

- option 1: foam ball or other small soft object
- option 2: Bibles, pencils, copies of Resource Sheet 2
- option 3: copies of Resource Sheet 3, materials listed there
- option 4: Color Pack 37; *Singing the Feast*,
bit.ly/SingingTheFeast

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

In advance, cut orange paper into narrow strips, about 3" x ¼", five per person. Print the sentence, "Loving God, hear our prayers." on a slip of paper for a child to read during Gathering Advent ritual. If you are using option 3 in Responding, gather materials listed on Resource Sheet 3 (Make an Advent Wreath).

As you greet the children, welcome each one and ask about how they used their hands to help others this week. When you are ready to begin, have the group help you arrange the purple or blue cloth on the worship table. (Use the color your congregation uses in worship during Advent.) Place Color Pack 1 on the table, along with an offering basket and the Bible open to 1 Corinthians. Place votive candleholders on Color Pack 1, matching them with the candles on the wreath.

Have the children sit down. Ask:

- ✠ What do you remember about Advent, the weeks before Christmas?
- ✠ How do you celebrate Advent in your home?

As needed, offer the following information: Advent begins the church year. It includes the four Sundays before Christmas Day. During Advent, we wait and prepare for the coming of Jesus. The color is purple or blue, royal colors. Invite a child to point to this season on Color Pack 2. Suggest that the children look around the church building for signs of Advent today.

Lead the children in this Advent prayer, which will be used each Sunday during Advent.

Leader: Holy God, be with us as we prepare our hearts for the coming of the Christ. And everyone says, "Loving God, hear our prayers."
(Pause for the children to repeat the response.)

Child: On this first Sunday we light the candle of hope and thank God for that gift.



FEASTING on the WORD

CURRICULUM

A Loving Greeting

For safety reasons, many churches do not allow lighted candles in classrooms. The Advent ritual takes this into account.

Leader: You may put an orange paper strip in one candleholder when you thank God for something in your life. (*Model what you mean by saying, "Thank you, God, for . . .," and placing a strip in one votive candleholder.*)

When everyone who wishes to thank God has done so, conclude the prayer with:

Leader: Shine your light on us, God, and help us see your Son, Jesus, in new ways. Amen.

To prepare the children to hear the opening of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, ask:

- ✧ What kind words did someone say to you this week?
- ✧ What kind words did you say to someone else this week?

Comment that the Bible story for today includes kind words for the people of a church long ago.

EXPLORING

Ask:

- ✧ What do you remember about Paul, who began many new churches long, long ago?

Help the children recall that Paul taught many people about Jesus. Explain that the letter they will hear today was to the church in Corinth. Show them where this letter is found in the New Testament of the Bible. If your Bible has a map of Paul's journeys, point out Corinth.

Assign a child to hold up Color Pack 3 when you signal. Read Resource Sheet 1 (Paul's Kind Words). Ask:

- ✧ What kind words did you hear in this letter?
- ✧ How does it help people to hear kind words from others?
- ✧ How can you give kind words to others?

Allow a wide range of possibilities for answers to the last question above. The options in Responding range from memorizing Paul's words to making an Advent wreath so they can hear kind words with their families during Advent.

RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest older children who can work on their own.

1. **Game** This "Pass the Grace" game will help the children remember these words of blessing adapted from 1 Corinthians 1:3: "Grace to you and peace from God." Stand in a circle. Say, "Grace to you, (*Name*)," and toss a foam ball or other light object to someone in the circle. That person responds, "And peace from God." The person with the ball does the same thing, tossing the ball to someone else. Play until each one has had several turns. Conclude by saying the whole verse in unison. Ask:

- ✧ To whom might you say these kind words?

EASY
PREP

You may wish to send the Advent wreath activities home whether or not the children make Advent wreaths.

God, We Sing

God, we sing with praise
to you,
Light the flame of *hope*
anew;
Light this candle, light the
way,
Bring *hope* into our hearts
today.
Jesus, near us as we pray,
Let *hope* be in our hearts
today.

Encourage them to think of people at home, at school, and wherever they go during the week.

- 2. Blessings** Paul's kind words are also known as a blessing. To help older children think about the meaning of blessing, provide copies of Resource Sheet 2 (A Blessing), Bibles, and pencils. Have the children work through the resource sheet and prepare a blessing to be used in Closing.
- 3. Advent Wreath** While some families may have an Advent wreath, the children can make their own. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 3 (Make an Advent Wreath) and help children to follow the directions. After wreaths are made, talk about how they can be used at home, pointing out the directions. Supply grocery sacks for the children to take home wreaths, copies of Resource Sheet 3, and the envelope with strips.
- 4. Song** The song "God, We Sing" (Color Pack 37, [Singing the Feast](#)) will be used throughout Advent in Closing. Teach it to the children so they are ready to sing the first stanza in Closing for this session. The children can first hum to the music and begin to add words as they come to know the melody.

CLOSING

Gather at the worship table, around the Advent wreath. Remind the group that this is the first Sunday of Advent, the season when we get ready for Christmas, the birth of Jesus.

Sing the first stanza of "God, We Sing" (Color Pack 37, [Singing the Feast](#)).

If some children prepared a blessing, have them read it to the group now. If they did not, send this benediction around the circle, "May you find God's hope in your life this week."

As you say good-bye to each child, encourage the children to return for the next session. Be sure they have their Advent wreaths or anything you have for them to take home.

Paul's Kind Words

(Based on 1 Corinthians 1:3-9)

Corinth is a large city in Greece. When Paul went there, he worked as a tentmaker to pay for his room and food. (Show Color Pack 3.) Paul wrote more than one letter to this new church. Two of them are in the Bible. This is how one of them begins, with kind words to the people in the church in Corinth.

A letter from Paul, an apostle of Jesus the Christ,
chosen by God.

To the people in the church in Corinth and to any
others who believe in Christ who read this letter.

I pray that God and Jesus the Christ will give you
peace and grace.

I thank God for you all the time, that God gave you
grace in Jesus the Christ. Jesus helps you to speak
and know so much about God. The way you speak
about Jesus shows that you know the truth.

From the way you speak and know Jesus it is clear
that God has given you everything you need until
Jesus comes again.

God keeps promises and it is God who has called you
to believe in Christ Jesus. That means that you will
be faithful to the end.

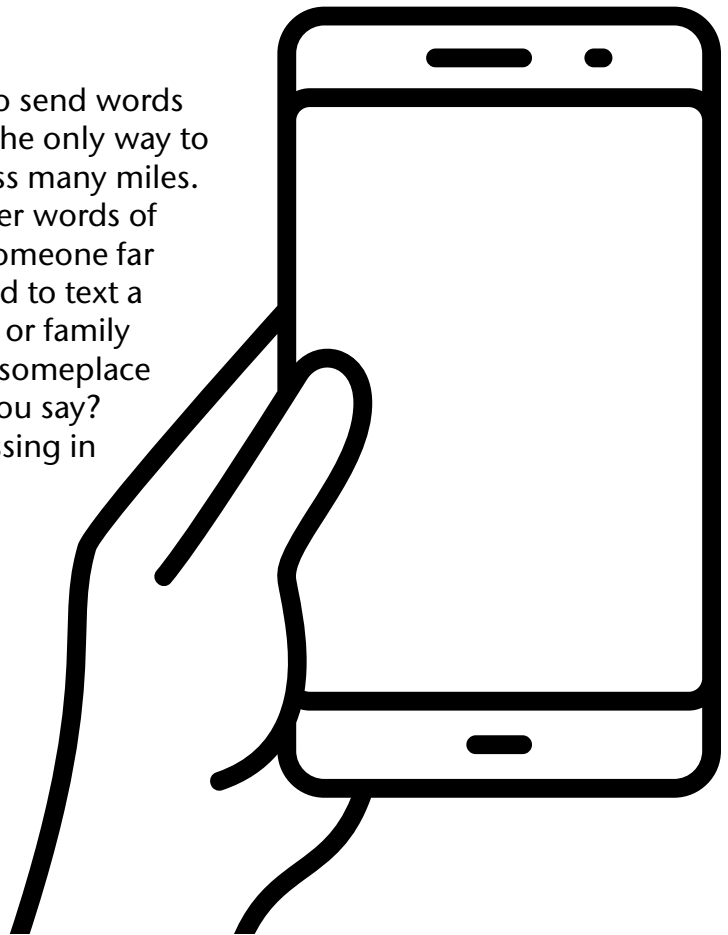
A Blessing

In the Bible, a person is considered blessed when receiving God's gifts and God's approval. Sometimes these blessings can be seen: food to eat, a place to live, a family. Other times, blessings refer to things that cannot be seen or measured: knowing deep in your heart that God loves you no matter what.

In the whole Bible, you find stories where people speak words of God's blessing to others. Look up Numbers 6:22–27. It is in the Old Testament. Read God's instructions for a blessing to use as part of worship. Have you ever heard this blessing?

When we speak words of blessing to others, we are telling them how much we want them to know and feel God's blessings. Find 1 Corinthians 1:3–9, the verses you heard earlier. This time you will read them as recorded in your Bible. Where do you read words of blessing there? Write them here. If you get stuck, find a hint at the bottom of the page.

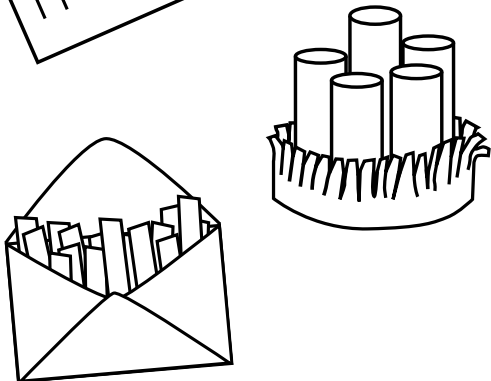
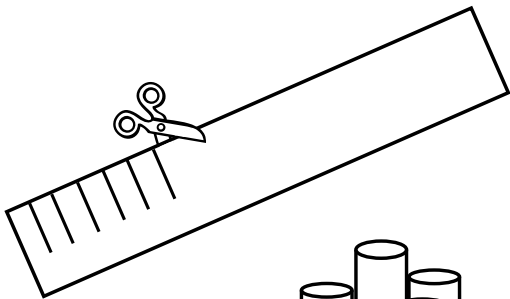
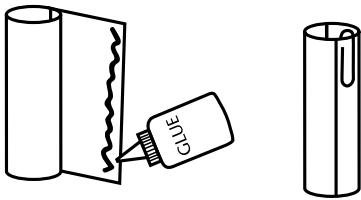
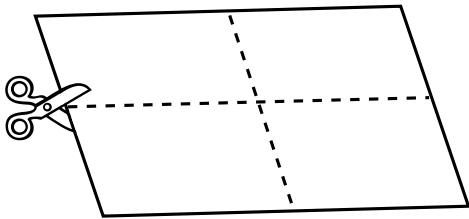
Paul wrote letters to send words of blessing. It was the only way to communicate across many miles. How might you offer words of blessing today to someone far away? If you wanted to text a blessing to a friend or family member who lives someplace else, what would you say? Write your text blessing in the screen.



Hint: Many blessings start with the word *may*.

You will need:

- ❑ purple or blue, orange, dark green, and white construction paper
- ❑ scissors
- ❑ glue or glue stick
- ❑ paper clip, envelope
- ❑ grocery sack

**Make an Advent Wreath**

1. **Make the four candles for the four Sundays in Advent.** Use a 9" x 12" sheet of purple or dark blue construction paper, according to the color your church uses in worship. Cut the paper into quarters. Roll each piece, starting at the short end, to make 4½-inch tall candles, about 1 inch in diameter. Glue the edge of each roll and use a paper clip to hold it in place until glue dries.
2. **Make one Christ candle for the center of the wreath.** Trim a 9" x 12" piece of white construction paper to 9" x 10". Cut it into quarters. Roll one piece, starting at the long end, to make a 5-inch tall candle. Glue the edge and use a paper clip to hold it in place until the glue dries.
3. **Make the wreath.** Cut a 2" x 12" piece of dark green construction paper. Cut about halfway into the strip along the long edge to make "fringe." Glue the strip into a ring around the five candles. Hold it closed with a paper clip until dry, then fold the fringes out like foliage.
4. **Cut strips for the flames.** From orange construction paper, cut about 40 thin strips that are 6 inches long. Keep strips in an envelope for use during Advent.
5. **Take home your wreath,** envelope with strips, and this sheet. Invite your family to join you in the activities described in the box.

On the **first Sunday of Advent**, give thanks to God for something in your life, and place orange strips in one purple or blue candle.

On the **second Sunday of Advent**, tell ways you are getting ready for Christmas, and place orange strips in another candle.

On the **third Sunday of Advent**, name persons or places in need of God's love, and place orange strips in a third candle.

On the **fourth Sunday of Advent**, tell about something kind you did for another person this week, and place orange strips in the fourth candle.